

Senator Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.), Senator Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), and Congressman Peter Welch (D) – announced Friday that grants to nine Vermont agricultural producers, totaling \$857,542, will support the agricultural innovation that is helping to shape Vermont’s economic future. The grants were awarded under a competitive process through the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development’s Value-Added Producer Grant program.

Leahy, the most senior member of the Senate Agriculture committee, is a longtime champion of the program and has fostered value-added efforts in Vermont, including the newly opened Vermont Food Venture Center in Hardwick, Vt. In addition to the Vermont Farm to Plate initiative and USDA’s Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food program, the Value-Added Producer Grant program offers support to the nation’s innovative agricultural producers, many of them in Vermont. Leahy said, “These grants will help several of our most innovative producers. These Vermont farms and firms continue to think outside the box and seek ways to improve their products to benefit and interest Vermont’s expanding marketing base. Rewarding and supporting their innovation and hard work is a great way to move our agricultural economy forward.”

Sanders, Senate sponsor of legislation to promote community-supported agriculture, said: “There is a bright future for agriculture in the state of Vermont. Farmers, like businesses and schools, are working on new ways to grow, develop and market agricultural products. It is good to see the USDA recognize that agriculture in Vermont is innovative and forward-looking, and it is especially good that USDA is providing support for these nine agricultural producers.”

Welch, a member of the House Agriculture Committee, said, “Vermont companies are known the world over for providing top-quality agricultural products. Their success is integral to the state’s economy and identity. Today’s news will allow these hard-working Vermont companies

to expand their reach, create jobs and strengthen Vermont's rural economy."

"These grants provide the capital resources necessary for business growth and job creation," said Molly Lambert, USDA Rural Development Vermont State Director. "Through these investments USDA is strengthening the economic foundation of rural Vermont."

The recipients of the grants are awarded funds for projects which will lead to the production or distribution of value-added agricultural products. Farm-based renewable energy projects are also eligible for funding. Eligible applicants to the program include independent producers, farmer cooperatives, agricultural producer groups, and majority-controlled producer-based business ventures.

The USDA cites the Green Mountain Organic Creamery as an example of a business perfectly suited to make the most of these seed funds: "Green Mountain Organic Creamery, LLC in North Ferrisburgh, Vt., will receive a working capital grant to market certified organic, bottled pasteurized milk, butter, ice cream and other dairy products. Owners Cheryl and John DeVos founded the dairy to provide local, organic dairy products to the community and throughout the Northeast. Green Mountain was recognized as the Vermont Dairy of the Year in 2011."

The full list of Vermont grant recipients is below.

State

Town

Applicant Name

Award Amount

Vermont

East Hardwick

Kingdom Creamery

\$300,000

Vermont

North Ferrisburgh

Green Mountain Organic Creamery, LLC

\$300,000

Vermont

Newport

The Success Factor

\$15,480

Vermont

West Glover

Sweet Rowen Farmstead, LLC

\$47,869

Vermont

Corinth

Tamarack Tunis

\$49,999

Vermont

Townshend

Big Picture Farm LC3

\$49,057

Vermont

Isle La Motte

Hall Home Place, LLC

\$24,389

Vermont

Enosburg

Boston Post Dairy, LLC

\$38,201

Vermont

Craftsbury Common

Shadagee Farm

\$32,547